

## Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, December 2, 1877, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. 75 West Cromwell Rd., Kensington, Sunday, December 2nd., 1877. My dear Mrs. Bell:

My first letter from our pretty new home must be written to Alec's Mother, and before I begin to tell you anything of ourselves, I must say how very anxious both Alec and I are getting, not having heard from you for three weeks. Alec thinks if you were well you would surely write, while if not Mr. Bell would take care not to say a word. But I do hope if anything is wrong Mr. Bell will let us know. His silence will only alarm Alec more than the most anxious letter could do. Then he would feel he knew the worst, otherwise he will dread, he knows not what and I cannot bear to think dear Mrs. Bell that you may be sick and suffering without our knowing of it and sympathizing with you. I do hope Alec is mistaken.

We moved into our house Friday afternoon, today is Sunday. Alec has had a slight feverish cold for a week past, and he had a headache and was feeling altogether miserable and unhappy so our home coming was hardly a very bright affair. Mary Home and our servant Emma went into the house the day before, so when we arrived we found the dinning room fire lighted and a nice supper of beef steak for me and red herrings for Alec was soon ready. I had bought some coarse cotton sheets for them the day before but they did not understand about them and would have had to sleep without any, but Mary Home had brought her own. We are using them ourselves at present, tomorrow I hope to go to a wholesale warehouse with Mrs. Home and buy my own linen ones and some tableclothes and napkins and towels of which we stand in great need. Alec would not let me buy anything until we were inside the house and could judge exactly what we wanted. We bought some knives, forks and spoons yesterday while Mary Home set to

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work to enlarge some of Alec's things which have grown to be too small for him since he was married.

You have an idea where we are have you not? West Cromwell Road 2 is the less aristocratic end of Cromwell Road. We are divided from it by Earls court Road, Hogarth Road is the second or third street coming to Earls court Road above Cromwell Road, so we are quite near Mrs. Home. Our house is four stories high and has a large basement and has seventeen rooms, not including the basement or big bath room. This seems very big to me, but the rooms though numerous are none of them large and some very small. Downstairs raised half a dozen steps from the ground are the dinning room Alec's study and the china closet. The dinning room is one of the prettiest I have seen. Imagine a good sized room that would be square but for the bay window facing the north, the walls covered with rather cold red paper and wainscoted with oak, a handsome and simple fireplace with caken mantle piece and facings with pretty tiles around the grate and on the hearth and a bright brass fender. The wall opposite the bay window and separating the dinning from Alec's room forms an alcove large enough for a large simple oaken cupboard with handsome earthenware pots and pitchers of a new style, dark grey with dark blue figuring which forms such a relief to the dark yellow of the wood. We have placed two tall green plants there too. The carpet of a pretty grey and blue brussels pattern, the table cover dark red matching the leather seats of the oak chairs all harmonise well with the surroundings.

Alec's room has cold greenish grey walls and wainscotting of oak fireplace with titles and heavy dark red curtains like the dinning room. It's furniture is a large comfortable chinz covered couch, big study table at which I am writing now while Alec strides up and down deep in some scientific discussion with Chester who has dropped in for an after tea chat, a big commodius armchair of red leather, it belongs to the dinning room but Alec has appropriated it. In a corner stands a smaller table on which Alec has placed two boxes pigeoned holed, like the letter boxes in a postoffice. He 3 has purloined them from the wine closet and means to put his letters in them. The window reaches to the ground and

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opens out to a little piazza with stairs leading down to the ground. We have quite a large plot of ground, a lawn in the middle and a flower border running around the wall. I must hurry on to the rest of the house. The parlor is over the dinning room with a bay window. The walls covered with paint colored paper, the wainscotting painted white. There is a handsome fireplace with two mantelpieces with pretty china ornaments, a grand piano with a sofa beside it pulled out into the room occupies one side of the room. No the door is on the same side and a large but at present bare easel stands in the corner nearest the fire. Opposite the fire stands an eastlake and some chairs. A table occupies the bay window with small chairs in front of each separate window. Drawn out into the room are an immense chinz covered arm chair, wicker rocking chair and another covered chintz chair. Little tables and a stand on which is placed a pretty wicker stand holding two pots of ferns one above the other, stand around the room. Our bedroom is next door, it was the guest chamber I suppose, and contains the only double bed in the house. A pretty big one too, and with delicate pink chintz curtains. The sun shines in all day long so the room is always warm and pleasant while dark red and lace curtains prevent too much sunshine. There is a narrow room on the first landing, our trunks are packed up there now but they are to be taken up into the attic and the bed etc. removed, and then the room will be used as one of Alec's two laboratories, the other being in the attic. On the third floor are two bedrooms and a dressing room, and on the landing between this floor and the drawing room is the bathroom with a hand basin and hot water pipes which are such a comfort this cool damp weather. There is only one servants room in the attic, two others were the young ladies rooms, and still another the artist brother studio which will be Alec's second workroom, Emma has the servants room, Miss Home the other large one, a pleasant and sunshiny apartment. The other room is my storeroom. It is rather soon yet to decide how I like housekeeping, but it will not be Miss Homes or indeed Emma's fault, if I find it very hard work. Emma was Mrs. Homes servant, the best she ever had and though she does wear glasses and is rather awkward. She certainly seems a very good servant neat and clean and painstaking. She does not know very much about waiting on the table but is willing to learn, Mrs. Home was only afraid she would not work well under Miss Home, but they

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have done very well thus far. Miss Home gives me some trouble, for she is so anxious to do all she can that I fear she overtaxes her strength, I have to look after her all the time to see that she is not on her feet doing Emma's work, for Emma is rather slow. Miss Home certainly looks very feeble. Alec says much aged, but I donot think so if she is, as he says sixty-five. She seems to have been the victim of a series of frauds it seems the man in possession of her house was forcibly ejected by the auctioneer acting under papers signed with Miss Homes name — forgeries —. Mr. Pluker the lawyer, who finally got possession of and let the house for her, retaining the deed of lease, and exacting as payment of her services forty-five out of the eighty pounds yearly she received as rent, died the day before we first saw Miss. Home and Alec says he will go to the office tomorrow to see about Miss Home's affairs.

Alec lectured before the Society of Arts on the 28th. I send you a copy of the lecture. You see it was published next day, quite without his knowledge. The lecture was not written but taken down by short hand reporters. The hall is small and will only hold about five hundred, Long before the doors were opened there was a crowd waiting outside and five minutes after they opened the hall antiroom and entrance were chocked by the crowd. Mr. Reynolds said 5 more were turned away then entered and the papers add that people staid in the entrance through the lecture though they could not possibly hear a word. Alec says it took him ten minutes to force his way into the hall and he was glad I did not go as I should have been crushed to death. On Saturday he lectured in the Physical Science School of South Kensington Museum, but Alec says the lecture was a complete failure as he was tired out before he began and feeling faint and ill. The lecture began at three and he was sick all the afternoon but felt better in the evening and at two or three in the morning woke with an idea and forthwith not to work to write it down. Have you seen the Associated Press dispatch about the telephone. It is not sent yet but will be published in all tomorrow's papers. Col. Reynolds told the reporters he would tell them something on condition that they publish it. I believe it was decided only on Friday that the British government would take it up and in a few days some gentlemen will meet to consider the

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terms on which a Telephone Co. will be forced. Col. Reynolds thinks a United British Co. with capital of 250,000 own be organized before Xmas, but it may be necessary to form separate Co's for the three countries. Alec has lost his German patent but hopes to get another controlling it. Col. Reynolds is going to take out the Russian patent. He buys a half interest by paying the expenses for that patent and of that of all other countries not yet paid for, all of which amounts to several hundred pounds.

We are going to send you a little Xmas greeting by a friend of Mrs. Home's who sails on the 6th. We hope it will reach you at the right time and that it will please you. It goes with much love from us both.

With love to Mr. Bell and the Miss Symonds,

Ever yours, Affectionately, Mabel.